

HOME HERALD



Feb. 10, 1909

Lincoln, P. 7.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S POSITION AND VIEWS ON RELIGION AND TEMPERANCE

BY BAILEY D. DAWSON

HOW strangely anomalous the fact that in the last few years or decade at most, the question has been surprisingly raised as to Mr. Lincoln's views and position on the subjects of religion and temperance.

For nearly a half century, a majority of the American people as well as the civilized world, and particularly the people in Illinois, the Middle and Western states, were resting assured in the belief and fact, that Mr. Lincoln, throughout his wonderful life and illustrious career, had always depicted himself as a gentleman and was everywhere recognized as a temperance man in all things, especially in the non-use of intoxicating liquors.

As early as 1836 and before that, in the state legislature held at Vandalia, Mr. Lincoln, for some friends there, had written a petition on the temperance question then somewhat new, curiously surprising to the early settlers, pioneers of Illinois and the West, and presented it to the legislature and made a speech favoring the petition. In that early period in the houses of those from the Southern states, in the cupboards of nearly all the well-to-do families, a decanter or jug of liquor was always present, garnishing the sideboard with glasses, sugar and sometimes mint, as assurance of hospitality and good fellowship; provided, however, that the families had come from the chivalry of Kentucky or the "first families of the old dominion"—Cavaliers of Virginia, the mother of more presidents than any other state in the Union, and which gave to the country, as its first president, George Washington; also, Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence; James Madison, the framer of the Constitution of the United States, the great "Magna Charta" for the government of the whole people; James Monroe, the father and enforcer of the great, wise international doctrine, known as the "Monroe Doctrine;" John Marshall, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and great expounder of the Constitution.

It seems rather singular that, long after the great, good and noble president, Abraham Lincoln, had been shot to death by the assassin, J. Wilkes Booth, the question of his liquor drinking should be sprung upon the country as a surprise to its inhabitants, and more particularly to the men and women of his home state, Illinois, who knew him best and loved him most.

Along in the early fifties, Mr. Lincoln presided at a temperance debate in the old Presbyterian church in Jacksonville, Illinois, and participated in the discussion of the question, with the Rev. J. B. Marvin, a well known Universalist preacher, who not long ago was speaker of the House of Representatives of the state of Missouri and was a leading advocate and proclaimer of universal salvation.

Again, while Mr. Lincoln as a young man lived at Salem, Menard county, Illinois, before he enlisted in the "Black Hawk War" of 1832, and became captain of an infantry company of soldiers, he wrote and spoke on the question of temper-

"I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to what I have."

"I must stand with anybody that stands right; stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ance, in several school houses and other public places being asked because he was a temperance man. It is indeed passing strange, unaccountable how, after the lapse of many years, in the state of Mr. Lincoln's adoption, Illinois, so widely and well known as he was there, with his temperate life, orderly habits, open daily walk in and out before the people, he should now be charged by some fanatical enthusiasts known as the "Wets-Brewerites" as being a drinker of intoxicating liquors? A number of well known, credible citizens, intelligent and God fearing, have freely and cheerfully, through the public press of the country, given their testimony in strong denials of the false and scandalous accusations made against Mr. Lincoln. He is not present and cannot refute the charges and denounce the maligners of his good name and exemplary character. When the great wave of temperance reform swept over the country and the prairies of Illinois like wild fire in 1842 to 1855, Mr. Lincoln was known to have been among the most conspicuous and active members of what was called the "Washingtonians" by way of distinguishing them from other temperance organizations, such as the Sons of Temperance, "Blue Ribbon" and various temperance societies and leagues in Illinois and throughout the country in later years. I had known Mr. Lincoln since 1837, had often seen him with numerous prominent citizens of Springfield, and from other parts of the country, who were

known to indulge in the use of intoxicants and other kinds of liquors and sometimes to excess; but, I never saw or knew Mr. Lincoln to take a drink of anything stronger than sweet cider, of which he was very fond. While traveling the circuits in the practice of his profession as a leading lawyer of Illinois, he at one session of the court in Bureau county, came over to the house of Aaron Mercer, who always kept the best sweet cider in that neighborhood. He would sit for hours, regaling the folks with side-splitting stories, anecdotes, original and most entertaining, and while thus engaged in amusing the folks gathered about the fireside, would take several glasses of cider, with which to wash down the good, amusing stories. He continued the story-telling until time to retire for the night's refreshing sleep. In this connection, let me relate a story.

Judge Lawrence Weldon, of Clinton and Bloomington, Illinois, a most intimate life-long friend and associate in the practice of law, whom Mr. Lincoln, after he became president, appointed United States District Attorney for Southern Illinois at Springfield, said that he and a number of others were tasting or sampling a new sort of beer called "Buckbeer" (Judge Weldon called it by that name then) and Mr. Lincoln was called in and urged to taste and drink a glass of it; but, alas, after tasting it and smelling it, he spit it out, saying, "It tastes like a decoction of dirty water flavored with peach tree leaves." Judge Weldon many years after was asked about the incident of Mr. Lincoln's liquor drinking and remarked in answer thereto, that that was the only time he had ever seen or known of Mr. Lincoln's even drinking or tasting beer. Judge Weldon was a truthful, honorable gentleman, a good citizen, and at the time of his death a few years ago, at Washington City, D. C., was one of the judges of the Court of Claims, and his demise was deeply regretted by his many warm personal friends throughout the country. Surely, these with what has already been recited ought, in all good conscience, forever to settle and put to rest the late trumped up, false, and ridiculous stories about Mr. Lincoln's having been a user of intoxicating beverages or liquors in any form or manner whatsoever. I hope for truth and humanity's sake and the preservation of Mr. Lincoln's good character, reputation and stainless life,

that we shall hear no more slanderous aspersions of his great name, fame and sacred memory. Much more could be truthfully given in refutation of these shameful, cruel stories about one of the truest, noblest and most illustrious of presidents, eminent citizens and foremost Americans of the centuries; but the foregoing, doubtless, will be sufficient to convince all fair-minded, just and reasonable inquirers.

Now, as regards Mr. Lincoln's religious views and position, let me here and now declare, once for all, that while much has been written and more spoken concerning that matter, because of his great prominence in the state and nation, although he was not



ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD HOME
WHERE, ON SEVERAL NOTABLE OCCASIONS, VISITING POLITICIANS AND POLITICAL COMMITTEES WERE MET WITH THAT "ICE WATER HOSPITALITY" AS SOME DERISIVELY CALLED IT, WHICH IN THOSE DAYS ONLY A CANDIDATE UNHAPPILY WEDDED TO ABSTINENCE WOULD HAVE HAD THE COURAGE TO EXTEND TO HIS CONSTITUENTS

identified with or enrolled on the church books, as a member, or communicant of any orthodox religious congregation or church, yet, in his great life and in his inaugurals, and state papers as president of the United States, Mr. Lincoln fully recognized and acknowledged God as the All-Wise, Supreme Ruler of the universe and often and again recognized and acknowledged God as the author of all life and the preserver of nations, as well as individuals, irrespective of classes, conditions, colors and previous servitude. On leaving Springfield, Illinois, his home, to assume the reins of the government of the United States, to become the president of the whole country, he in the most tender, pathetic and affectionate language invoked the providence of Almighty God to safely guide and securely guard his family and many friends, and said that not without the guidance and over-ruling of Divine providence could he or the people of this great Nation be preserved and prospered. In language peculiarly his own and characteristic of his great soul and loving heart he tenderly, tearfully commended them to the loving care and protection of the great All-Wise God, invoking His loving benedictions upon them. While it can be truly said that Mr. Lincoln was not identified with any religious congregation, as member thereof, yet he attended with his family the Presbyterian church at Springfield, and during his occupancy of the White House at Washington City he and his family attended and held a pew in the Presbyterian church in

Washington at the junction of Fourteenth street and New York avenue. He was liberal, unsectarian truly catholic in the truer and higher sense of that term, in his views of religious faith and was far from the position or attitude of an atheist or infidel, as some of his traducers, revilers, and would-be historians have tried to make the people of the world at large believe. As evidence irrefutable, Mr. Lincoln always, in his Thanksgiving proclamation, expressed himself in devout and most humble language making acknowledgments to the God of all nations and peoples for the abundant care and safe guidance in all things pertaining to the welfare, health, lives and happiness of the state and nation. Mr. Lincoln, in one of his inaugural addresses to the American people in the midst of the greatest fratricidal wars of all time, said: "The mystic cords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chords of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

The foregoing tribute, so replete with beauty



and religious pathos, could not be penned or expressed by any one, unless he were imbued with a spirit of love to God and all mankind. While uttering such noble, sublime, religious sentiments as glowed in every line and word of the foregoing patriotic and loving tribute, paid to the people at home and the soldiers on the battlefields and to the heroic dead sleeping in unknown patriot graves, he could not have been an unbeliever in the Supreme God who rules over all.

A little before Mr. Lincoln left Springfield he sent for the Hon. Salmon P. Chase, of Ohio, with a view to his selection and appointment as Secretary of the Treasury, and on his arrival at the home of Mr. Lincoln, they attended services at the Presbyterian church on Sunday and heard Rev. W. H. Brown, the pastor, preach an eloquent and appropriate sermon, and the writer of this article, sat in a pew immediately behind the distinguished statesman, and knows whereof he affirms.

I think and hope that I have written enough facts and incidents concerning Mr. Lincoln's religious views and position on temperance to convince and satisfy any rational, impartial, just, and sensible reader of your valuable paper, that all this twaddle and ridiculous vituperation and slander of the great name, pure character and world-wide fame of Abraham Lincoln, one of the noblest, ablest, best, greatest of men, is without any foundation and wholly made up for sinister, political and factional purposes.

THE SNOWS OF GOD

BY FREDERICK HALL

IN TWO PARTS.
PART I.

"ANY word?" asked Seth.
"Any word you want," Eliza answered. "You look it up here, just as if it was a dictionary, and it tells you right where to turn to see what the Bible says about it."

Seth took the thick black volume and held it curiously. It was an odd book to have found its way into that frontier cabin, though it was like Eliza to have asked for it when Uncle John wrote to know what Christmas present he should send her. Seth had never seen such a book before or knew there was one, and, turning from the grateful glow of logs upon the hearth, he let his eye rove round the room seeking a word to be looked up. There was the plank floor, covered where they were sitting by a bit of worn rag carpet, against the log walls, where the flames made their own tall shadows dance; there stood the bench and two home-made chairs, there was the ladder which led to the loft above, where he slept; in the other room he could hear mother moaning softly, as she had been moaning all the evening, and just at her door lay along the floor a little ridge of white which the wind had drifted in through the chinks.

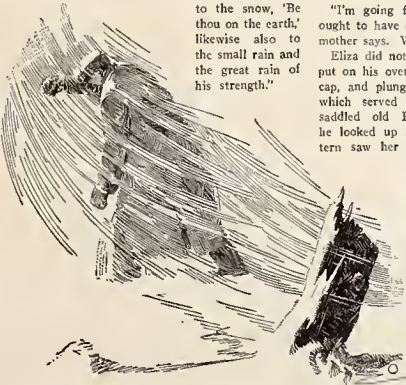
"What does it say about the snow?" he asked.

Eliza took again the new concordance and reached down her little Bible from the shelf above the fireplace, but at that moment there was a call from Mrs. Wiltse, their kind next neighbor from three miles up the river, and instantly Eliza rose and passed into her mother's room.

Seth sat silent for awhile, listening to the wind outside and gazing dreamily into the fire. There was nothing he could do for mother; little that anyone could do, except to wait, and as he watched the flames and listened to the wind there came upon him, perhaps out of the cold and darkness that shut them in, a strange demand for all the trouble which the months of struggle with the wilderness had brought. Accidents, losses, failure of crops, father's long journey down the river in hope of being able to earn enough to set them on their feet again, the cruel winter, with mother growing daily weaker! How had they been obliged to endure it all?

For him it was a most unnatural state of mind, and suddenly he stopped short in his thinking, picked up the concordance turned the leaves with unaccustomed fingers, and, finding at length the word he sought, began diligently to verify the references. "White as snow" was the most frequent phrase; there was something, too, about the treasures of the snow, and that he did not understand; but the verse he pondered longest over was this: "For he saith

to the snow, 'Be thou on the earth,' likewise also to the small rain and the great rain of his strength."



ELIZA WATCHED HIM AS HE PLUNGED OUT INTO THE STORM

That was an altogether new idea. The snow which had lain round them four full months, which had prevented work and almost prevented hunting, which had brought the cold to be battled with afresh each new day and beaten back so little by their roaring fires, which had brought—who could tell—perhaps mother's sickness itself—it was God's power. Not there in spite of Him or because He had merely let it come, but He had sent it; had said to it, "Be thou on the earth."

So intensely was he thinking that he did not hear the opening of the door from mother's room, and he knew that Eliza had entered only when he looked up and saw her standing before him, her eyes filled with tears.

"It's mother," she said, in answer to his question. "She's lost worse, Seth. She didn't know me when I went in."

Then he rose with sudden resolution.

"I'm going for a doctor, Liz," he said. "We'd ought to have done it long ago. I don't care what mother says. What's money at a time like this?"

Eliza did not answer, but she watched him as he put on his overcoat, his home-knit mittens and fur cap, and plunged out into the storm to the shed which served as a barn. Then, when he had saddled old Prince and was ready to mount, he looked up and by the glimmering of the lantern saw her standing in the doorway with her shawl drawn over her head.

"You're going to Nelligar?" she asked.

"That's the nearest one," he answered.

"It's twelve miles, isn't it?"

"Yes."

Her hand was beside his upon old Prince's bridle-rein and her eyes were filled with trouble.

"You won't let anything happen to you, will you, Seth? I know we ought to have a doctor, and you ought to go, but it's so far and it looks like snow tonight, and it's awful to get lost in the snow with no fences like we used

to have—at home. Oh, Seth, I wish we'd never come; I wish we'd never come. Father's gone and we don't know when he'll get back and mother—and if anything was to happen—"

For a moment she fairly gave up and he had to stop and comfort her. Then he led out old Prince and swung himself into the saddle.

"Just put the candle in the window, Liz," he said. "I'll find my way back to it all right. And you can

(Continued on page seventeen.)

